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Identity Management Strategies of Resident Assistants

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Rachel Edwards entitled "Identity Management Strategies of Resident Assistants." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication and Information.

John W. Haas, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Kenneth J. Levine, Michelle T. Violanti

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

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Identity Management Strategies of Resident Assistants

A Thesis

Presented for the Master of Science Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Rachel Elizabeth Edwards

August 2010

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Randy and Margaret Edwards, who through prayer and love (and some persistent phone calls!) fully supported my desire to attend UT. Thank you for trusting in God's sovereignty in my life.

And to my soon-to-be husband, David: for your support and love. Thank you for reminding me that each day is an adventure to be lived with enthusiasm.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude to each member of my committee: Dr. John Haas, Dr. Ken Levine, and Dr. Michelle Violanti. Thank you for sacrificing your time to help me explore a research area that is meaningful to me. I am grateful for your patience and encouragement, as well as your insight.

Specifically to Dr. Haas, thank you for your continued support throughout all of my years at UT. From those first days in class in Alumni Memorial Building to the successful defense of my thesis, you have been a source of encouragement and knowledge. Thank you for challenging me, for helping me to put stressful situations in perspective, and for your genuine concern about me as an individual.

Abstract

The resident assistant (RA) position at higher education institutions is a position of great influence. RAs have the opportunity to impact many students' lives through the various roles that they engage in as a RA. The most common roles that RAs are expected to perform include developing community, serving as a peer helper, being a friend to residents, and enforcing policy. The very nature of a multi-role position presents challenges for RAs in understanding how to effectively enact all of their roles.

This study aimed at developing an understanding of the ways in which RAs engage in identity management strategies with residents. To accomplish this purpose, 143 RAs were surveyed using an identity management strategies scale designed for this study. In addition, a previously designed self-monitoring scale was also administered to test the relationship between identity management strategies and self-monitoring. These scales were applied to situations representing each of the four primary roles of a RA: community developer, peer helper, friend, and policy enforcer.

The results indicate that RAs are more likely to engage in avoidance strategies during the policy enforcer role than any other strategy. In addition, first-year RAs generally use more effective identity management strategies when developing community than returner RAs use. First-year RAs' identity management strategies also appear to be more influenced by the RAs' desires to be friends with residents than returner RAs' identity management strategies. The results also indicate that female RAs are more effective in the community development role than male RAs. However, male RAs are more effective than female RAs in the policy enforcement role. A result that was supported throughout the study was the finding that RAs with upperclassmen residents are not as actively engaged in communicating their roles to residents

than are RAs with freshmen and upperclassmen residents or only freshmen residents. Finally, the relationship of perceived self-monitoring to RAs' choice of identity management strategies was not supported. The results of the study, interpretation of the data analysis, study implications, and directions for future research are discussed in detail.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and General Information

The resident assistant (RA) position on a university campus is widely regarded by higher education administrators as a valuable position. RAs are perceived to be on the "frontline," encountering daily interaction opportunities with students (Jaeger & Caison, 2006). As a result, RAs often possess a greater deal of influence in students' lives than administrators possess. The very nature of the RA position lends itself to empowering RAs with a great deal of influence by placing RAs in positions of leadership and authority (Jaeger & Caison, 2006).

A position of great influence, however, also presents a number of challenges. One of the most significant challenges that RAs face is balancing the numerous roles they are asked to fulfill (Schaller & Wagner, 2007). Although the RA position can vary somewhat from campus to campus, RAs are typically asked to develop community on their floors, enforce policies, serve as peer mentors, and even be a friend to residents, among other responsibilities (Burchard, 2001). While past research has addressed the manner in which RAs should be trained to engage in these roles, as well as the way that students respond to RAs, very little research has addressed the issue of how RAs perceive that they actually engage in these roles.

To determine whether RAs are engaging in their prescribed roles, it would be useful to explore the manner in which they present themselves to their residents. However, the presentation of self is a complex issue that is not easily defined or operationalized. A family of conceptually similar constructs that have been discussed in the literature are relevant to the current study. For the purposes of this study, that variable will be operationalized as identity management, although impression management and face management are also examined to determine their utility to this project.

The effectiveness of a RA is partly dependent upon the way that the RA communicates his or her roles and responsibilities to residents (Goddard, 1990). Past research has revealed that identity management explains how individuals present themselves to others; therefore, the identity management efforts of RAs are a factor in determining their effectiveness. By developing an understanding of the ways that RAs engage in identity management in relation to their many roles, student affairs administrators will be better equipped to determine selection standards for RAs, the types of training that RAs need most, and the accountability measures for RAs that should be enacted within residence life.

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the ways RAs engage in identity management strategies with residents. To accomplish this, a review of literature is presented. The RA position and roles are explored and defined (Boyer, 1990; Burchard, 2001; Davis & Daugherty, 1992; Goddard, 1990; Healea, 2006; Jaeger & Caison, 2006; Perkins & Atkinson, 1973; Schaller & Wagner, 2007). Next, the concept of identity management is explicated through a review of related literature, including impression management and face management (Afifi, Falato, & Weiner, 2001; Bolino & Turnley, 1999; Colvin, 2007; Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998; Goffman, 1959; Goodwin, 2007; Ho, 1976; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Jung & Hecht, 2004; Mokros, 2003; Niens & Cairns, 2003; Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Masumoto, Yokochi, Xiaohui, Pan, Takai, & Wilcox, 2001; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Ting-Toomey, 1999). A review of the self-monitoring literature will also be presented (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980; Duran & Spitzberg, 1995; Fandt & Ferris, 1990; Kolb, 1998; Lennox & Wolfe, 1984; Snyder, 1974; Stevens & Kristoff, 1995). Following the literature review, the study's research questions are outlined. Next, the methodology of the study is presented to lay the foundation for the results section. The findings related to each of the research questions are presented in the results

section, followed by the discussion section that explores the value of the findings for each research question. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Literature Review

Resident Assistants

RAs are primarily responsible for cultivating an environment on their floors that is conducive to positive growth for residents. Resident growth can be facilitated through social, academic, emotional, cultural, and even spiritual avenues (Goddard, 1990). Expectations of RAs grow and expand along with the student population at universities (Jaeger & Caison, 2006). As the student population becomes more diverse, RAs must adapt to fulfill students' needs. Expansion of the RA role in this manner indicates the need for continued growth, development, and training of RAs throughout their time in the position (Schaller & Wagner, 2007).

To provide continued training and support for RAs in an evolving residence life environment, the definition of a RA and the roles in which he or she is asked to serve should be established. Burchard (2001) developed an extensive list of the roles of a RA that include: advising, counseling, mediating, enforcing policies, coordinating events and programs, referring residents to resources, providing administrative support, working as a desk attendant, and serving as a liaison between university administrators and students. Others, such as Goddard (1990) and Healea (2006) include the roles of friend, academic advisor, and community developer. Taken together, four overarching roles are associated with the RA position: to develop community, to be a friend to residents, to be a peer helper for residents, and to enforce policy and discipline (Burchard, 2001; Goddard, 1990; Healea, 2006).

Community Development

One of the primary duties a RA faces in an attempt to develop community on the floor that he or she oversees, is the relationship of the floor community to larger communities in which

it exists (Davis & Daugherty, 1992). Not only is the RA's floor a small community within the larger community of the entire residence hall, but it is a part of even larger communities such as the university community itself. The central issue that RAs confront when dealing with this duty revolves around the purpose of community. If a RA is to face the challenge of developing community, then the purpose and benefits of community must be clear in order to provide motivation for community development (Davis & Daugherty, 1992). An essential component to building floor community is to create conditions conducive to the social growth and bonding of residents (Perkins & Atkinson, 1973). The benefits of creating an atmosphere that facilitates the development of community include a shared sense of responsibility, open communication, and common goals among residents (Davis & Daugherty, 1992). On a larger scale, developing a sense of community has been equated with establishing a larger sense of purpose. In essence, individuals joined by a community have a shared vision that stretches beyond their own goals (Boyer, 1990). Ideally then, the role of a RA in developing community should be to cast a vision of community that residents can embrace and of which they take ownership.

Friendship with Residents

The role of a RA as a friend to residents is a topic of debate in the literature. Some argue it is an expectation of the position (Goddard, 1990); others suggest it is possible to be friends with residents, but it is not a job expectation (Healea, 2006; Schaller & Wagner, 2007). Ultimately, being a friend to residents is either a job expectation or a benefit of the job, based on the responsibilities assigned RAs by their respective institutions. Regardless of the category under which befriending residents falls, the challenges that RAs face in this endeavor are significant. Friendship implies an inherent reciprocity; in a friendship both individuals are

mutually interested in pursuing a friendship with each other (Schaller & Wagner, 2007). The possibility of this occurring between a RA and a resident is diminished due to the numerous other roles a RA enacts. For example, the RA's role in enforcing policy often causes a stigma associated with a resident befriending the authority figure on the floor (Goddard, 1990). This challenge is more difficult to overcome if there is an age difference between the resident and RA. If the RA is older than the resident, then there can be the perception of a lack of similarity that usually leads to the development of friendship (Goddard, 1990). In addition, RAs might serve as friends to residents, but the lack of reciprocity can also spring from the RA side of the relationship. The RA might provide help and advice in the form of friendship for a resident, but it is often difficult for a RA to rely on a resident for help and advice in the same manner (Schaller & Wagner, 2007). Differences in power level, age, and freedom to speak openly about personal matters all contribute to this issue. Thus, while being a friend to residents is often an expected or recommended role of RAs, it is a difficult role to truly fulfill.

Peer Helper for Residents

Closely associated with being a friend is the role of serving as a peer helper for residents. The absence of the mutual benefit relationship that is present in friendship makes the peer helper role much easier for RAs to attain (Burchard, 2001). The peer helper role can take many different forms; RAs advise residents regarding educational matters, counsel residents with personal and interpersonal issues, and even mediate conflict (Burchard, 2001). Since the RA is one of the most accessible individuals to residents, residents can more easily utilize him or her as a peer helper rather than another individual at the university (Jaeger & Caison, 2006). This allows the purpose of residential life to be carried out on a day-to-day basis: enriching students'

lives and facilitating their development as individuals (Davis & Daugherty, 1992). Regarding the peer helper role, however, residents must choose to utilize the RA. Otherwise, the RA does not have the opportunity to fulfill the role, no matter how available and willing he or she is.

Policy Enforcement

The role of RAs as policy enforcers is perhaps the most difficult role to fulfill (Goddard, 1990). Their position dictates that RAs enforce both university-wide policies and housing policies, giving them a position of authority over their residents (Schaller & Wagner, 2007). The policy enforcer role causes RAs the most initial anxiety (Goddard, 1990). According to Schaller and Wagner (2007), enforcing policy is difficult for RAs because of the impact it has on relationships with their residents. The effect of the enforcement is not limited to just the confrontation and the following discipline measures; instead, the incident affects the relationship between the RA and resident, often compromising the RA's efforts to perform his or her other roles (Schaller & Wagner, 2007). Typically, this is due to the resident's reaction to the RA's enforcement of policy, although RAs do occasionally allow policy violation incidents to affect their following treatment of residents (Davis & Daugherty, 1992). According to Davis and Daugherty (1992), the element of discipline in the residence life environment teaches both residents and RAs that policy enforcement is an educational procedure. The process emphasizes learning to use discernment, rather than just being punished for policy violations. The RA role as a policy enforcer, therefore, is aimed at facilitating an educational environment designed to promote student development.

The primary roles of a RA are to be a community developer (Davis & Daugherty, 1992; Perkins & Atkinson, 1973; Boyer, 1990), friend (Goddard, 1990; Schaller & Wagner, 2007;

Healea, 2006), peer helper (Burchard, 2001; Jaeger & Caison, 2006; Davis & Daugherty, 1992), and policy enforcer (Goddard, 1990; Schaller & Wagner, 2007; Davis & Daugherty, 1992). With so many roles and responsibilities, RAs face a challenge in communicating their expectations to residents (Burchard, 2001). It is a challenge they should strive to overcome; RAs who clearly communicate to residents their goals in each role are more effective than RAs who are ambiguous regarding their roles (Goddard, 1990).

Identity Management

The concept of identity has been a focus of study across the social and behavioral sciences. Self-concept, self-image, and social roles have all been tied to identity. More recently, however, researchers have linked identity to the act of communication (Jung & Hecht, 2004). Goffman's (1959) early work on identity brought a focus on how individuals enact their identities. This dramaturgical perspective views individuals as "actors" who engage in "performances" for particular "audiences." Goffman (1959) posits that these interactions take place so that the individuals, or "actors," can define the situation for the "audiences." Colvin (2007) later defines the dramaturgical perspective as how individuals express themselves in order to create meaning and influence. The creation of this meaning and influence stems from interactions with other individuals (Colvin, 2007).

From this dramaturgical focus, the study of the relationship between communication and identity has developed. According to Mokros (2003), self-reflection of discourse and interaction creates one's identity. Ting-Toomey's (1999) work assumes that individuals' identities are established through mutual communication interactions, therefore allowing individuals to negotiate their identities. A new direction has emerged, however, with the Communication

Theory of Identity (CTI) (Jung & Hecht, 2004). CTI focuses more on mutual influences between identity and communication, in contrast to previous theories and research on the relationship. According to Jung and Hecht (2004), CTI "conceptualizes identity as communication rather than seeing identity as merely a product of communication or vice versa" (p. 266). The developments in research regarding the relationship between identity and communication result in a need to understand in what specific ways individuals communicate their identities.

The manner in which individuals engage in managing their identities through communication has been defined in several different ways. Some scholars choose to regard the concept as face management (Ho, 1976; Oetzel, et al., 2001; Ting-Toomey, 1999), stemming from Ting-Toomey's (1999) face negotiation theory. Others refer to impression management (Bolino & Turnley, 1999; Goodwin, 2007) and identity management (Afifi, et al., 2001; Jung & Hecht, 2004; Niens & Cairns, 2003). For the purposes of this study, the term identity management will be utilized, although face management and impression management will also be reviewed to lay out a broad understanding of this family of concepts.

Face is an individual's sense of positive self-image in the context of social interaction, and facework refers to the communicative strategies through which an individual enacts self-face and even challenges or supports another's face (Oetzel et. al, 2001). The concept of face originated in Chinese culture, and Goffman (1959) was the first Western scholar to study the concept of face and facework. The concept of face management did not start to take a definite shape until Ting-Toomey postulated the face negotiation theory. Oetzel et. al (2001) found 13 different types of facework behavior used in interpersonal conflict situations: aggression, apologize, avoid, compromise, consider the other, defend self, express feelings, give in, involve a third party, pretend, private discussion, remain calm, and talk about the problem. Facework

behavior is not just limited to these strategies, however. The concept of face management is still being explored in research and the list of facework behaviors is likely to grow in the future (Oetzel et. al, 2001).

Impression management, in a very similar vein, is "the process whereby people seek to influence the image others have of them" (Bolino & Turnley, 1999, p. 187). This process can be either conscious or unconscious. Verbal statements, nonverbal behaviors, and even modification of physical appearance can be used to manage others' impressions of oneself (Goodwin, 2007). Even though impression management has been shown to occur, there are no measures of impression management that are widely accepted (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). Jones and Pittman (1982), the first to begin the effort to identify the wide range of impression management behaviors, developed a five-category taxonomy of impression management behaviors: self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication (Jones & Pittman, 1982).

Following their taxonomic development, few studies reviewed more than one or two of Jones and Pittman's categories at one time. For example, Stevens and Kristoff (1995) observed the use of self-promotion and opinion conformity by job applicants during interviews; the study examined the impact of the tactics on interview outcomes. Even impression management studies that drew from a taxonomy other than Jones and Pittman's (1982) tended to focus on just a few categories of impression management. Fandt and Ferris (1990) studied the influence of accountability, ambiguity, and self-monitoring on individuals' tendencies to manipulate information they report to their supervisors. The general approach of these studies is to focus on a select few impression management tactics. While this strengthens the studies in focus and objectivity, such studies using this approach are typically conducted in laboratory settings due to the difficulty in gaining access to organizations; therefore, the generalizability of the findings to

organizational settings is often problematic (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). In 1999, however, Bolino and Turnley used Jones and Pittman's (1982) categories to develop a scale to measure impression management strategies in organizations; the scale was found to be both reliable and valid. Further research is still needed to test the scale again and to continue adding to the impression management strategies literature.

The term identity management is often used interchangeably with impression management in the literature (Niens & Carns, 2003). Just as with impression management, communication and social interactions help "create, maintain, and reveal individual and social identities within relationships" (Goodwin, 2007, p. 20). Goffman (1963) identified two types of identity management strategies: corrective and preventative. After an identity threat, individuals use corrective strategies, including excuses, justifications, and apologies. Preventative strategies are used to avoid negative perceptions and include passing and disidentifiers (Goffman, 1963). While some scholars might disagree with Goffman's categorization of these strategies, identity management research does support the assertion that all individuals engage in identity management (Afifi et. al, 2001; Goodwin, 2007). In fact, even autonomous individuals use identity management strategies, despite their assertion that the opinions of others matter very little (Afifi et. al, 2001).

Some of the most autonomous individuals are those in leadership positions. Gardner and Cleavenger (1998) studied the use of impression management strategies among transformational leaders on the global-level. Their findings confirmed that impression management is a vital part of the communication process for leaders; leaders actively engage in numerous impression management strategies (Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998). Colvin (2007) also developed a study that analyzed leaders' use of impression management strategies. Undergraduate students who

served as peer mentors in academic classes were found to engage in impression management strategies in order to convince the other students of their credibility and knowledge (Colvin, 2007). Regardless of the positions of the leaders in these two studies and other studies on the topic, identity management strategies were enacted. This provides support for Schlenker and Weigold's (1992) assertion that an individual's identity is different from his or her situated identity; individual leaders are not established in their identities just because they are leaders.

With the understanding that all individuals engage in identity management strategies, it is reasonable to assume RAs also engage in identity management strategies. Identity management among RAs is particularly important because it affects their ability to lead. Goddard (1990) illustrates this by positing that the manner in which a RA "tells and sells, and participates and delegates will have a significant impact on their ability to lead" (p. 3). By managing their identities, RAs partially determine their own effectiveness. There is a lack of research on the topic of RAs and identity management, but the value that such research would bring to the field is evident.

Self-Monitoring

If, as recent identity management research has asserted, one's identity is conceptualized by communication, then an individual's level of communication competency directly affects identity management strategies (Jung & Hecht, 2004; Mokros, 2003). As the focus of many empirical studies measuring competent communication, self-monitoring is a significant component in the equation of communication competence (Duran & Spitzberg, 1995). Snyder (1974) detailed the study and measurement of how individuals observe and control their self-presentation and expressive behavior. Labeled as self-monitoring, this act occurs when

individuals develop a concern for the appropriateness of their self-presentation. Duran and Spitzberg (1995) identify high self-monitors as those who perceive situational cues and alter their communication performance according to those cues.

The connection between leadership and self-monitoring can be explained by illustrating the goal of self-monitoring; self-monitoring often aims at creating favorable impressions of oneself (Kolb, 1998). Individuals who desire to be in leadership roles often employ self-monitoring to gain the support of others. In fact, self-monitoring has been found to be positively related to self-reported leader emergence (Kolb, 1998).

An understanding of what self-monitoring entails is therefore necessary to identify the act of self-monitoring among leaders. Even though numerous studies have put forth definitions of self-monitoring, there is not a clear agreement across the literature as to what components of self-monitoring exist. Duran and Spitzberg (1995) synthesize past research in order to present five components of self-monitoring: 1) concern for appropriateness, 2) awareness of social comparison information, 3) the ability to adopt self-presentation, 4) the use of the ability to adopt self-presentation, and 5) cross-situational variability of social performances. Briggs, et al. (1980) also identified components of self-monitoring: 1) acting ability, 2) extraversion, and 3) other-directedness. In 1984, Lennox and Wolfe developed their Revised Self-Monitoring Scale. The scale is a two component model that includes: 1) the ability to modify self-presentation and 2) sensitivity to expressive behaviors of others (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). Snyder (1974) also developed a measure of self-monitoring which includes three major components: 1) the willingness to be the center of attention, 2) sensitivity to the reactions of others, and 3) the ability and willingness to adjust behavior to induce positive reactions in others.

Regardless of the differing opinions on the most effective self-monitoring measure and the specific components of self-monitoring, it is widely accepted that self-monitoring is the act of individuals observing and controlling their behavior in an effort to present themselves in an appropriate manner. While the use of self-monitoring is common among all individuals, it holds particularly interesting implications among leaders; leaders who use self-monitoring effectively can create the impressions they want to make. The use of self-monitoring among RAs is another area of study that holds great potential for interesting findings, but it has not yet been the topic of research studies.

Based on the previous review of literature, the following research questions have been established:

RQ_1: How do RAs engage in identity management regarding their role in developing community?

RQ_2: How do RAs engage in identity management regarding their role as a peer helper for residents?

RQ_3: How do RAs engage in identity management regarding their role as a friend to residents?

RQ_4: How do RAs engage in identity management regarding their role in enforcing policy?

RQ_5: Do first-year RAs engage in different identity management strategies than RAs in their second, third, or fourth year in the position?

RQ_6: Do male RAs engage in different identity management strategies than female RAs?

RQ_7: Do the types of identity management strategies in which RAs engage vary according to the type of resident population on each floor (mostly freshmen, a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen, or mostly upperclassmen)?

RQ_8: Do the types of identity management strategies in which RAs engage vary according to the style of residence hall (suite, traditional, or apartment) in which RAs work?

RQ_9: What is the relationship among the likelihood of engaging in identity management strategies and perceptions of self-monitoring?

Chapter 2

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study were 143 RAs from a large, public university in the southeastern United States. The sample is representative of the entire RA population at the university, as only approximately 10 RAs were not present when the survey was administered. The sample included 63 male RAs and 80 female RAs.

Procedures

The participants were solicited during spring semester, campus-wide RA training. The training period occurred several days before the first day of classes of the semester. The RAs were in the same room for a training session and paper surveys were distributed to all of the RAs at the same time for completion. No credit or compensation was given for the completion of the survey. All participants completed the questionnaire on a voluntary basis. By completing the questionnaire, all participants acknowledged informed consent.

Measures

To operationalize identity management strategies used by RAs, it was necessary to design a scale since no existing measure captured the relevant management strategies. The scale developed is based on several different measures and findings in the identity management literature. In addition, the measures created are limited to an organizational context and are not completely applicable to the context of identity management strategies among RAs (see Bolino & Turnley, 1999).

Before designing the measure, however, a total of 8 informal interviews and discussion groups were facilitated with RAs to determine the most common types of situations in which

RAs serve in one of their four primary roles: community developer, peer helper, friend, and policy enforcer. Based on these findings, four hypothetical situations were created to represent a typical experience for a RA in each one of these roles.

Next, a scale was designed to measure how likely RAs would be to engage in certain identity management strategies in each one of the situations. The scale was designed by determining common strategies in which RAs might engage based on three different sources of measures or research findings on identity management and facework behaviors. First, the 13 different facework behaviors presented by Oetzel et al. (2001) were used as a basis for identifying different identity management strategies in which RAs might engage. Building on the work of Jones and Pittman (1982), the scale that Bolino and Turnley (1999) created to measure identity management strategies in organizations was also used as a basis for the measure in this study. Lastly, Goffman's (1963) categorization of identity management strategies was another source that provided direction in designing an identity management measure that focuses on RAs' behaviors. Once possible identity management strategies for each hypothetical situation were determined, a Likert-response scale was created. Possible responses include highly unlikely, unlikely, slightly unlikely, slightly likely, likely, and highly likely.

The final scale that was used measured self-monitoring. Created in 1974 by Snyder, the self-monitoring scale is widely used across self-monitoring studies. A copy of the complete measure used for this study is available in Appendix A.

Analyses

In each of the four sections of the questionnaire, participants rated the likelihood that they would engage in possible identity management strategies. The scoring is on a six-point scale. For analysis, 1 represents the response "highly unlikely" and 6 represents the response "highly

likely." For each measure, higher scores indicate a stronger inclination toward that identity management strategy.

Once the data were collected, the responses were entered in SPSS 18 for data analysis. First, the mean for each response was determined to identify which strategies RAs are most likely and least likely to engage. Difference testing procedures were run using the demographic information as independent variables in each analysis. Univariate ANOVAs and independent t-tests revealed whether groupings among the demographic variables had an effect on the identity management strategies in which RAs engage: a) suite style halls vs. traditional style halls vs. apartment style halls, b) freshmen resident population vs. upperclassmen resident population vs. mixed resident population, c) male RA vs. female RA, and d) first-year RA vs. 2^{nd}, 3^{rd}, or 4^{th} year (returner) RA.

To test the relationship among the likelihood of engaging in identity management strategies and perceptions of self-monitoring, a correlation matrix was run. The analysis used the responses from the self-monitoring scale and the mean of the responses for each type of identity management strategy across the different RA roles. Each strategy was used in the correlation matrix, regardless of if the strategy was used across one or multiple roles. A reliability analysis was also run to determine the reliability of the self-monitoring scale used. The scale was not found to be reliable ($\alpha = .347$). The implications of this are addressed in the discussion section.

Chapter 3

Results

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the ways in which RAs engage in identity management strategies with residents. The findings illuminate the communication practices used by RAs in their numerous roles. Practical implications of the findings provide insight into determining selection standards for RAs, developing training methods for RAs, and establishing accountability measures for RAs in their day-to-day job.

Research Question 1

Research question one explored how RAs engage in identity management strategies regarding their role in developing community. Descriptive statistics were employed to determine which identity management strategies are most likely to be used by RAs during a situation related to the role of developing community. Ingratiation was the strategy that was found to be used most often. The results for the ingratiation strategy were: *M= 5.13, SD= .92*, thus meaning that ingratiation was "likely" to be used. The results for the express feelings strategy were: *M= 4.73, SD= .93*, thus meaning that expression of feelings was "likely" to be used. The results for the exemplification strategy were *M= 3.87, SD= 1.50*, thus meaning that exemplification was between "slightly likely" and "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the avoid strategy were: *M= 2.87, SD= 1.2*, thus meaning that avoidance was "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the pretend strategy were: *M= 2.86, SD= 1.38*, thus meaning that pretending was "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the supplication strategy were: *M= 2.59, SD= 1.11*, thus meaning that supplication was "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the apologize strategy were *M= 2.48, SD= 1.22*, thus meaning that apologizing was "unlikely" to be

used. The results for the defend self strategy were: *M= 2.23, SD= 1.11*, thus meaning that defending oneself was "unlikely" to be used. [*See Table 1 for further results.*]

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Identity Management Strategies Used in Community Development Role

Identity Management Strategies	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Apologize	143	1	6	2.48	1.215
Avoid	143	1	6	2.87	1.268
Defend Self	143	1	6	2.23	1.105
Express Feelings	143	1	6	4.73	.927
Pretend	143	1	6	2.86	1.382
Ingratiation	143	2	6	5.13	.921
Exemplification	143	1	6	3.87	1.498
Supplication	143	1	5	2.59	1.109
Valid N (listwise)	143				

Research Question 2

The second research question asks how RAs engage in identity management strategies regarding their role as a peer helper for residents. Descriptive statistics were employed to determine which identity management strategies are most likely to be used by RAs when serving as a peer helper for residents. The express feelings strategy was found to be used most often. The results for the express feelings strategy were: *M= 4.85, SD= .83*, thus meaning that expressing one's feelings was "likely" to be used. The results for the consider the other strategy were: *M= 4.53, SD= .83*, thus meaning that considering the other was between "slightly likely" and "likely" to be used. The results for the exemplification strategy were: *M= 4.25, SD= 1.42*, thus meaning that exemplification was "slightly likely" to be used. The results for the involve a third party strategy were: *M= 4.07, SD= 1.19*, thus meaning that involving a third party was "slightly likely" to be used. The results for the avoid strategy were: *M= 1.73, SD= .78*, thus meaning that avoidance was "unlikely" to be used. [*See Table 2 for further results.*]

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Identity Management Strategies Used in Peer Helper Role

Identity Management Strategies	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Avoid	143	1	6	1.73	.778
Consider the Other	143	1	6	4.53	1.118
Involve a Third Party	143	1	6	4.07	1.191
Express Feelings	143	2	6	4.85	.833
Exemplification	143	1	6	4.25	1.422
Valid N (listwise)	143				

Research Question 3

The third research question asks how RAs engage in identity management strategies regarding their role as a friend to residents. Descriptive statistics were employed to determine which identity management strategies are most likely to be used by RAs when serving as a friend to residents. The consider the other strategy was found to be used most often. The results for the consider the other strategy were: *M= 4.84, SD= .77*, thus meaning that considering the other was "likely" to be used. The results for the express feelings strategy were: *M= 4.64, SD=1.08*, thus meaning that expression of feelings was "likely" to be used. The results for the ingratiation strategy were: *M= 4.12, SD= 1.12*, thus meaning that ingratiation was "slightly likely" to be used. The results for the apologize strategy were: *M= 3.35, SD= 1.41*, thus meaning that apologizing was "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the involve a third party strategy were: *M= 3.29, SD= 1.22*, thus meaning that involving a third party was "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the supplication strategy were: *M= 3.13, SD= 1.36*, thus meaning that supplication was "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the pretend strategy were: *M= 2.61, SD= 1.12*, thus meaning that pretending was "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the avoid strategy were: *M= 2.04, SD= .88*, thus meaning that avoiding was "unlikely" to be used. [*See Table 3 for further results.*]

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Identity Management Strategies Used in Role of Being a Friend to Residents

Identity Management Strategies	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Apologize	143	1	6	3.35	1.411
Avoid	143	1	5	2.04	.879
Consider the Other	143	2	6	4.84	.766
Involve a Third Party	143	1	6	3.29	1.221
Pretend	143	1	5	2.61	1.120
Ingratiation	143	1	6	4.12	1.116
Supplication	143	1	6	3.13	1.360
Express Feelings	143	2	6	4.64	1.084
Valid N (listwise)	143				

Research Question 4

The fourth research question asks how RAs engage in identity management strategies regarding their role in enforcing policy. Descriptive statistics were employed to determine which identity management strategies are most likely to be used by RAs when enforcing policy. The avoid strategy was found to be used most often. The results for the avoid strategy were: *M= 4.61, SD= 1.15*, thus meaning that avoidance was "likely" to be used. The results for the defend self strategy were: *M= 3.22, SD= 1.46*, thus meaning that defense of self was "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the intimidation strategy were: *M= 3.20, SD= 1.48*, thus meaning that intimidation was "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the apologize strategy were: *M= 2.66, SD= 1.26*, thus meaning that apologizing was "slightly unlikely" to be used. The results for the involve a third party strategy were: *M= 2.52, SD= 1.32*, thus meaning that involving a third party was between "unlikely" and "slightly unlikely" to be used. [*See Table 4 for further results.*]

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Identity Management Strategies Used in Role of Policy Enforcement

Identity Management Strategies	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Apologize	143	1	6	2.66	1.257
Avoid	143	1	6	4.61	1.145
Defend Self	143	1	6	3.22	1.460
Involve a Third Party	143	1	6	2.52	1.321
Intimidation	143	1	6	3.20	1.479
Valid N (listwise)	143				

Research Question 5

Research question five examined whether new (first-year) RAs engage in identity management strategies differently than returning (second, third, or fourth-year) RAs. A total of six identity management strategies across the four roles of a RA were found to be significantly different in regards to first-year and returner RAs' choices of strategy. The results for the apologize strategy used in the role of community development were: $t = 2.0, > .05$. First-year RAs ($M = 2.67$) were "slightly unlikely" to use the apologize strategy while returner RAs ($M = 2.27$) were "unlikely" to use the apologize strategy. The results for the express feelings strategy used in the role of community development were: $t = 1.9, > .07$. First-year RAs ($M = 4.87$) were "likely" to use expression of feelings while returner RAs ($M = 4.58$) were between "slightly likely" and "likely" to use expression of feelings. The results for the exemplification strategy used in the role of community development were: $t = 2.4, > .02$. First-year RAs ($M = 4.14$) were "slightly likely" to use exemplification while returner RAs ($M = 3.55$) were between "slightly unlikely" and "slightly likely" to use exemplification. There were no statistically significant findings for a difference in use of strategies among first-year RAs and returner RAs serving in the peer helper role. The results for the consider the other strategy used in the role of being a friend to residents were: $t = 2.0, > .04$. Both first-year RAs ($M = 4.96$) and returner RAs ($M = 4.70$) were "likely" to consider the other but first-year RAs were more likely to do so than returner RAs. The results for the avoid strategy used in the role of policy enforcement were: $t = 2.0, > .05$. First year-RAs ($M = 4.43$) were "slightly likely" to avoid while returner RAs ($M = 4.81$) were "likely" to avoid. The results for the defend self strategy used in the role of policy enforcement were: $t = 2.2, > .03$. First-year RAs ($M = 3.47$) were between "slightly unlikely"

and "slightly likely" to defend themselves while returner RAs (*M= 2.94*) were "slightly unlikely" to defend themselves. [*See Table 5 and Table 6 for further results.*]

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Identity Management Strategies Used by First-Year and Returner RAs

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Apologize Strategy used in Community Development Role	First-year	76	2.67	1.226	.141
	Returner	67	2.27	1.175	.144
Express Feelings Strategy used in Community Development Role	First-year	76	4.87	.737	.084
	Returner	67	4.58	1.089	.133
Exemplification Strategy used in Community Development Role	First-year	76	4.14	1.402	.161
	Returner	67	3.55	1.550	.189
Consider the Other Strategy used in the Friend Role	First-year	76	4.96	.701	.080
	Returner	67	4.70	.817	.100
Avoid Strategy used in the Policy Enforcement Role	First-year	76	4.43	1.170	.134
	Returner	67	4.81	1.090	.133
Defend Self Strategy used in the Policy Enforcement Role	First-year	76	3.47	1.390	.159
	Returner	67	2.94	1.496	.183

Table 6: Independent Samples Test for Identity Management Strategies Used by First-Year and Returner RAs

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Apologize Strategy used in Community Development Role	Equal variances assumed	.857	.356	1.997	141	.048
	Equal variances not assumed			2.002	139.999	.047
Express Feelings Strategy used in Community Development Role	Equal variances assumed	8.894	.003	1.860	141	.065
	Equal variances not assumed			1.817	113.679	.072
Exemplification Strategy used in Community Development Role	Equal variances assumed	2.018	.158	2.400	141	.018
	Equal variances not assumed			2.385	134.132	.018
Consider the Other Strategy used in the Friend Role	Equal variances assumed	5.207	.024	2.041	141	.043
	Equal variances not assumed			2.021	130.977	.045
Avoid Strategy used in the Policy Enforcement Role	Equal variances assumed	1.398	.239	-1.957	141	.052
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.966	140.551	.051
Defend Self Strategy used in the Policy Enforcement Role	Equal variances assumed	2.002	.159	2.209	141	.029
	Equal variances not assumed			2.199	140.551	.030

Research Question 6

The sixth research question asks if male RAs engage in identity management strategies differently than female RAs. A total of five identity management strategies across the four roles of a RA were found to be significantly different in regards to male and female RAs' choices of strategy. The results for the exemplification strategy used in the role of community development were: $t = 2.0, > .05$. Male RAs ($M = 3.59$) were between "slightly unlikely" and "slightly likely" to use exemplification while female RAs ($M = 4.09$) were "slightly likely" to use exemplification. The results for the consider the other strategy used in the role of peer helper were: $t = 3.5, > .001$. Male RAs ($M = 4.17$) were "slightly likely" to consider the other while female RAs ($M = 4.81$) were "likely" to consider the other. The results for the express feelings strategy used in the role of being a friend to residents were: $t = 2.6, > .01$. Male RAs ($M = 4.38$) were "slightly likely" to express their feelings while female RAs ($M = 4.85$) were "likely" to express their feelings. The results for the apologize strategy used in the role of policy enforcement were: $t = 2.0, > .05$. Male RAs ($M = 2.43$) were "unlikely" to apologize while female RAs ($M = 2.84$) were "slightly unlikely" to apologize. The results for the involve a third party strategy used in the role of policy enforcement were $t = 1.7, > .08$. Male RAs ($M = 2.30$) were "unlikely" to involve a third party while female RAs ($M = 2.69$) were "slightly unlikely" to involve a third party. [*See Table 7 and Table 8 for further results.*]

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Identity Management Strategies Used by Male and Female RAs

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Exemplification Strategy used in the Community Development Role	Male	63	3.59	1.593	.201
	Female	80	4.09	1.389	.155
Consider the Other Strategy used in the Peer Helper Role	Male	63	4.17	1.115	.140
	Female	80	4.81	1.045	.117
Express Feelings Strategy used in the Friend Role	Male	63	4.38	1.184	.149
	Female	80	4.85	.956	.107
Apologize Strategy used in the Policy Enforcement Role	Male	63	2.43	1.201	.151
	Female	80	2.84	1.277	.143
Involve a Third Party Strategy used in the Policy Enforcement Role	Male	63	2.30	1.315	.166
	Female	80	2.69	1.308	.146

Table 8: Independent Samples Test for Identity Management Strategies Used by Male and Female RAs

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Exemplification Strategy used in Community Development Role	Equal variances assumed	2.618	.108	-2.004	141	.047
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.971	123.682	.051
Consider the Other Strategy used in Peer Helper Role	Equal variances assumed	1.808	.181	-3.519	141	.001
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.492	128.965	.001
Express Feelings Strategy used in Friend Role	Equal variances assumed	6.299	.013	-2.622	141	.010
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.557	117.690	.012
Apologize Strategy used in the Policy Enforcement Role	Equal variances assumed	.866	.354	-1.951	141	.053
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.965	136.591	.051
Involve a Third Party Strategy used in the Policy Enforcement Role	Equal variances assumed	.538	.464	-1.747	141	.083
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.746	132.913	.083

Research Question 7

The seventh research question asks if the types of identity management strategies in which RAs engage vary according to the type of resident population on each floor (mostly freshmen, mix of freshmen and upperclassmen, or mostly upperclassmen). A total of seven identity management strategies across the four roles of a RA were found to be significantly different in regards to the type of student population with which RAs work. The results for the avoid strategy used in the role of community development were: *Sig.= .006*. RAs with mostly freshmen residents (*M= 2.76*) were "slightly unlikely" to use avoidance. RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents (*M= 2.45*) were between "unlikely" and "slightly unlikely" to use avoidance. RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents (*M= 3.37*) were "slightly unlikely" to use avoidance. The results for the express feelings strategy used in the role of community development were: *Sig.= .018*. RAs with mostly freshmen residents (*M= 4.86*) were "likely" to express their feelings. RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents (*M= 4.90*) were "likely" to express their feelings. RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents (*M= 4.39*) were "slightly likely" to express their feelings. The results for the exemplification strategy used in the role of community development were: *Sig.= .071*. RAs with mostly freshmen residents (*M= 4.04*) were "slightly likely" to use exemplification. RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents (*M= 4.06*) were "slightly likely" to use exemplification. RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents (*M= 3.41*) were "slightly unlikely" to use exemplification. The results for the consider the other strategy used in the role of serving as a peer helper were: *Sig.= .042*. RAs with mostly freshmen residents (*M= 4.72*) were "likely" to consider the other. RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents (*M= 4.58*) were "likely" to consider the other. RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents (*M= 4.17*) were "slightly likely" to consider the

other. The results for the avoid strategy used in the role of being a friend to residents were: *Sig.= .023*. RAs with mostly freshmen residents (*M= 1.97*) were "unlikely" to use avoidance. RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents (*M= 1.81*) were "unlikely" to use avoidance. RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents (*M= 2.34*) were also "unlikely" to use avoidance but had a higher score than the other two groups. The results for the avoid strategy used in the role of policy enforcement were: *Sig.= .025*. RAs with mostly freshmen residents (*M= 4.69*) were "likely" to use avoidance. RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents (*M= 4.13*) were "slightly likely" to use avoidance. RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents (*M= 4.83*) were "likely" to use avoidance. The results for the intimidation strategy used in the role of policy enforcement were: *Sig.= .054*. RAs with mostly freshmen residents (*M= 3.20*) were "slightly unlikely" to use intimidation. RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents (*M= 3.68*) were "slightly likely" to use intimidation. RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents (*M= 2.83*) were "slightly unlikely" to use intimidation. [*See Table 9 for further results.*]

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics and Univariate Analysis of Variance for Identity Management Strategies Used by RAs with Resident Populations of Mostly Freshmen, a Mix of Freshmen and Upperclassmen, and Mostly Upperclassmen

		Univariate	Descriptive Statistics		
		Sig.	Mean	St. Deviation	N
Avoid Strategy used in Community Development Role	Mostly Freshmen	.006	2.76	1.189	71
	Upperclassmen and Freshmen		2.45	1.091	31
	Mostly Upperclassmen		3.37	1.392	41
Express Feelings Strategy used in Community Development Role	Mostly Freshmen	.018	4.86	.961	71
	Upperclassmen and Freshmen		4.90	.651	31
	Mostly Upperclassmen		4.39	.972	41
Exemplification Strategy used in Community Development Role	Mostly Freshmen	.071	4.04	1.544	71
	Upperclassmen and Freshmen		4.06	1.389	31
	Mostly Upperclassmen		3.41	1.431	41
Consider the Other Strategy used in Peer Helper Role	Mostly Freshmen	.042	4.72	.959	71
	Upperclassmen and Freshmen		4.58	1.119	31
	Mostly Upperclassmen		4.17	1.302	41
Avoid Strategy used in Friend Role	Mostly Freshmen	.023	1.97	.941	71
	Upperclassmen and Freshmen		1.81	.703	31
	Mostly Upperclassmen		2.34	.825	41
Avoid Strategy used in Policy Enforcement Role	Mostly Freshmen	.025	4.69	1.022	71
	Upperclassmen and Freshmen		4.13	1.408	31
	Mostly Upperclassmen		4.83	1.046	41
Intimidation Strategy used in Policy Enforcement Role	Mostly Freshmen	.054	3.20	1.430	71
	Upperclassmen and Freshmen		3.68	1.536	31
	Mostly Upperclassmen		2.83	1.447	41

Research Question 8

The eighth research question asks if the types of identity management strategies in which RAs engage vary according to the style of residence hall (suite, traditional, apartment) in which they work. A total of five identity management strategies across the four roles of a RA were found to be significantly different in regards to the style of residence hall in which RAs work. The results for the avoid strategy used in the role of community development were: *Sig.= .019*. RAs in suite style residence halls (*M= 2.81*) were "slightly unlikely" to use avoidance. RAs in traditional style residence halls (*M= 2.50*) were between "unlikely" and "slightly unlikely" to use avoidance. RAs in apartment style residence halls (*M= 3.32*) were also "slightly unlikely" to use avoidance but scored higher than the other groups. The results for the express feelings strategy used in the role of community development were: *Sig.= .041*. RAs in suite style residence halls (*M= 4.86*) were "likely" to express their feelings. RAs in traditional style residence halls (*M= 4.82*) were "likely" to express their feelings. RAs in apartment style residence halls (*M= 4.41*) were "slightly likely" to express their feelings. The results for the exemplification strategy used in the role of developing community were: *Sig.= .042*. RAs in suite style residence halls (*M= 4.15*) were "slightly likely" to use exemplification. RAs in traditional style residence halls (*M= 3.76*) were "slightly likely" to use exemplification. RAs in apartment style residence halls (*M= 3.41*) were "slightly unlikely" to use exemplification. There were no statistically significant findings for a difference among RAs in suite style, traditional style, or apartment style residence halls and their choices of identity management strategies when serving as peer helpers for residents. The results for the apologize strategy used in the role of being a friend to residents were: *Sig.= .049*. RAs in suite style residence halls (*M= 3.57*) were "slightly likely" to apologize. RAs in traditional style residence halls (*M= 2.85*) were "slightly unlikely" to

apologize. RAs in apartment style residence halls (*M= 3.38*) were "slightly unlikely" to apologize. The results for the avoid strategy used in the role of being a friend to residents were: *Sig.= .003*. RAs in suite style residence halls (*M= 2.07*) were "unlikely" to use avoidance. RAs in traditional style residence halls (*M= 1.65*) were "unlikely" to use avoidance but scored lower than all of the other groups. RAs in apartment style residence halls (*M= 2.35*) were "unlikely" to use avoidance but scored higher than all of the other groups. There were no statistically significant findings for a difference among RAs in suite style, traditional style, or apartment style residence halls and their choice of identity management strategies when enforcing policy. [*See Table 10 for further results.*]

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics and Univariate Analysis of Variance for Identity Management Strategies Used by RAs in Suite, Traditional, and Apartment Style Residence Halls

		Univariate	Descriptive Statistics		
		Sig.	Mean	St. Deviation	N
Avoid Strategy used in Community Development Role	Suite Style	.019	2.81	1.218	72
	Traditional Style		2.50	1.052	34
	Apartment Style		3.32	1.435	37
Express Feelings Strategy used in Community Development Role	Suite Style	.041	4.86	.877	72
	Traditional Style		4.82	.968	34
	Apartment Style		4.41	.927	37
Exemplification Strategy used in Community Development Role	Suite Style	.042	4.15	1.469	72
	Traditional Style		3.76	1.577	34
	Apartment Style		3.41	1.384	37
Apologize Strategy used in Friend Role	Suite Style	.049	3.57	1.362	72
	Traditional Style		2.85	1.459	34
	Apartment Style		3.38	1.381	37
Avoid Strategy used in Friend Role	Suite Style	.003	2.07	.939	72
	Traditional Style		1.65	.597	34
	Apartment Style		2.35	.857	37

Research Question 9

The ninth research question asks what the relationship is among RAs' likelihood of engaging in identity management strategies and their perceptions of self-monitoring. In general, the findings did not support the notion that self-monitoring is related to choice of identity management strategies. However, the findings did reveal four weak correlations. The pretend strategy was found to have a very weak, positive correlation to self-monitoring [$r(143) = .215, p > .01$]. The apologize strategy was found to have a weak, positive correlation to self-monitoring [$r(143) = .191, p > .05$]. The avoid strategy was found to have a very weak, positive correlation to self-monitoring [$r(143) = .234, p > .01$]. The defend self strategy was found to have a weak, positive correlation [$r(143) = .189, p > .05$].

Post-hoc Analysis

In the post-hoc analysis, the scores for each strategy were compiled, regardless of the number of RA roles in which the strategy was used. Those scores were used in three types of data analyses: frequency distributions, independent t-tests, and ANOVAs. These post-hoc analyses provide further exploration of the subject of study by looking at the common use of identity management strategies across different RA roles and situations, rather than being specifically applied to each role and situation.

First, frequency distributions were employed; this reveals the distribution of scores for each strategy across RA roles. The pretend strategy was used across two RA roles: community development and friendship with residents. 72% of participants indicated a strong to slight tendency not to engage in the pretend strategy. The apologize strategy was used across three RA roles: community development, friendship, and policy enforcement. 66% of participants indicated a strong to slight tendency not to engage in the apologize strategy. The avoid strategy

was used across four RA roles: community development, peer helper, friendship with residents, and policy enforcement. 72% of participants indicated a strong to slight tendency not to engage in the avoid strategy. The defend self strategy was used across two RA roles: community development and policy enforcement. 97% of participants indicated they were either slightly likely to use the defend self strategy or unlikely to use the defend self strategy. The express feelings strategy was used across three RA roles: community development, peer helper, and friendship with residents. Only 2% of participants were unlikely to use the expression of feelings strategy; all other participants indicated at least a slightly likely tendency to use the strategy. The ingratiation strategy was used across two RA roles: community development and friendship with residents. 72% of participants indicated at least a slight tendency to use the ingratiation strategy. The exemplification strategy was used across two RA roles: community development and peer helper. Only 18% of participants indicated a tendency to be unlikely to use the exemplification strategy. The supplication strategy was used across two RA roles: community development and friendship with residents. 69% of participants indicated they were unlikely to use the supplication strategy. The consider the other strategy was used across two RA roles: peer helper and friendship with residents. Only 4% of participants indicated an unlikely tendency to use the consider the other strategy. The involve a third party strategy was used across three RA roles: peer helper, friendship with residents, and policy enforcement. 46% of participants were unlikely to use the involve a third party strategy. The intimidation strategy was only used in one RA role: policy enforcement. 51% of participants indicated they were unlikely to use the intimidation strategy.

Next, an independent t-test was run using the total scores of strategies used across the RA roles and the responses of first-year RAs versus returner RAs. No significant findings resulted from the analysis.

Another independent t-test was also run using the total scores of strategies used across the RA roles and the response of male RAs versus female RAs. The use of the consider the other strategy was found to be significant: *t= 2.3, > .02*. Male RAs (*M = 9.06*) were less likely to use the consider the other strategy than female RAs (*M = 9.61*).

ANOVAs were run using the total scores of strategies used across the RA roles and the responses of RAs with freshmen residents, RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents, and RAs with upperclassmen residents. Five strategies were found to be significant: avoid, express feelings, exemplification, consider the other, and intimidation. The results for the avoid strategy were: *Sig. = .000*. The mean response of RAs with freshmen residents was: *M = 11.14*. The mean response of RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents was: *M = 10.03*. The mean response of RAs with upperclassmen residents was: *M = 12.37*. The results for the express feelings strategy were: *Sig. = .030*. The mean response of RAs with freshmen residents was: *M = 14.44*. The mean response of RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents was: *M = 14.61*. The mean response of RAs with a mix of upperclassmen residents was: *M = 13.56*. The results for the exemplification strategy were: *Sig. = .011*. The mean response of RAs with freshmen residents was: *M = 8.*52. The mean response of RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents was: *M = 8.13*. The mean response of RAs with upperclassmen residents was: *M = 7.41*. The results for the consider the other strategy were: *Sig. = .023*. The mean response of RAs with freshmen residents was: *M = 9.65*. The mean response of RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents was: *M = 9.39*.

The mean response of RAs with upperclassmen residents was: *M = 8.88*. The results for the intimidation strategy were: *Sig. = .054*. The mean response of RAs with freshmen residents was: *M = 3.20*. The mean response of RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents was: *M = 3.68*. The mean response of RAs with upperclassmen residents was: *M = 2.83*.

ANOVAs were also run using the total scores of strategies across the RA roles and the responses of RAs in suite style halls, traditional style halls, and apartment style halls. Three strategies were found to be significant: avoid, express feelings, and exemplification. The results for the avoid strategy were: *Sig. = .001*. The mean response of RAs in suite style halls was: *M = 11.28*. The mean response of RAs in traditional style halls was: *M = 10.12*. The mean response of RAs in apartment style halls was: *M = 12.24*. The results for the express feelings strategy were: *Sig. = .043*. The mean response of RAs in suite style halls was: *M = 14.32*. The mean response of RAs in traditional style halls was: *M = 14.71*. The mean response of RAs in apartment style halls was: *M = 13.59*. The results for the exemplification strategy were: *Sig. = .013*. The mean response of RAs in suite style halls was: *M = 8.54*. The mean response of RAs in traditional style halls was: *M = 7.97*. The mean response of RAs in apartment style halls was: *M = 7.43*.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the ways in which RAs engage in identity management strategies with residents. The results of this study provide clear insight into some identity management strategy choices among RAs in certain circumstances. In contrast, however, the results of this study also reveal ambiguity surrounding some identity management strategy choices in other circumstances. The discussion of the findings is organized by each research question and the post-hoc analysis. In addition, implications of the findings, limitations of the study, and future areas of research are discussed.

The first research question explores how RAs engage in identity management strategies regarding their role in developing community. Both ingratiation and expression of feelings were two identity management strategies that RAs were "likely" to use. According to Davis and Daugherty (1992), an important component of building community is creating an atmosphere that fosters open communication. Therefore, the finding that RAs are "likely" to engage in expression of feelings when managing their identity can be viewed as beneficial. The use of ingratiation reveals that RAs are "likely" to do favors or use flattery to get residents to like them (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). In the context of developing community, it is likely that RAs are using this strategy because the development of community will not occur if residents lack motivation to engage in community development efforts put forth by the RA (Davis & Daugherty, 1992). The prevalence of the ingratiation strategy indicates the need to determine if a RA's desire to be liked by residents is helpful or detrimental to the development of community. In addition, the use of favors or flattery by RAs is concerning; while ingratiation is not

necessarily negative, it implies RAs could potentially be jeopardizing their authority if boundary lines of professionalism are crossed when doing favors or using flattery.

Exemplification was "slightly likely" to be used as an identity management strategy during the development of community. According to Bolino and Turnley's (1999) definition of exemplification as a strategy that includes self-sacrificing and going beyond the call of duty, exemplification is a positive identity management strategy for RAs to utilize, regardless of the situation. The finding regarding exemplification thus reveals RAs are "slightly likely" to engage in a positive identity management strategy when developing community.

Avoid, pretend, supplication, apologize, and defend self were all identity management strategies RAs were "slightly unlikely" or "unlikely" to employ. None of these strategies would strongly support the community development efforts of building a shared sense of responsibility and facilitating open communication; therefore, these results imply that RAs are not choosing to engage in some identity management strategies that would be detrimental to their community development efforts (Davis & Daugherty, 1992).

The second research question explores how RAs engage in identity management strategies regarding their role as a peer helper to residents. The express feelings strategy was "likely" to be used by RAs serving in this role. The purpose of the peer helper role is to provide advice and help for residents; thus, the result implies that the use of this strategy aids RAs in fulfilling this role (Burchard, 2001). The same implication can be attributed to the finding that RAs are between "slightly likely" and "likely" to engage in the consider the other strategy. In addition, exemplification was "slightly likely" to be used, indicating that RAs are willing to sacrifice their time and go beyond their required actions to help residents. The involve a third party strategy was also "slightly likely" to be used; further research is needed to explicate the

meaning of this finding. Involving a third party could be either positive or negative. Knowledge of who the third party is and how he or she is involved in the process would provide insight into the implication of the finding that RAs are "slightly likely" to use this strategy. The avoid strategy was "unlikely" to be used by RAs; this finding solidified the implications of the other results by revealing that RAs are more likely to engage in a positive identity management strategy when serving as a peer helper rather than avoid the situation completely.

The third research question explores how RAs engage in identity management strategies regarding their role as a friend to residents. Both the consider the other and express feelings strategies were "likely" to be used by RAs; the purpose of the role of being a friend to residents is thus fulfilled by allowing for support and advice to be given to residents through honest and open communication (Schaller & Wagner, 2007). Ingratiation was "slightly likely" to be used, indicating the use of another strategy that supports the goal of the friendship role. Apologize, involve a third party, supplication, and pretend all include actions that detract from an attempt to develop an honest and healthy friendship with residents; therefore, it is promising that these strategies were found to be "slightly unlikely" to be used by RAs. The avoid strategy was "unlikely" to be used, also indicating a positive finding since RAs appear to be more likely to engage in their role as a friend to residents rather than avoid the role.

The fourth research question explores how RAs engage in identity management strategies regarding their role in enforcing policy. Avoid was the only strategy that was "likely" to be used. The common use of the avoid strategy supports previous research that claims the policy enforcement role is the most difficult role in which RAs are asked to engage (Goddard, 1990; Schaller & Wagner, 2007). Due to the nature of the avoid strategy, however, the finding indicates that RAs are often not engaging in the role by avoiding confrontation. A larger

implication of this is that the educational benefit of policy enforcement in residence life is not being fully extended to residents if RAs are avoiding the role of policy enforcers (Davis & Daugherty, 1992). All other strategies that were addressed – defend self, intimidation, apologize, and involve a third party – were either "slightly unlikely" to be used or "unlikely" to be used. The limited use of the intimidation strategy is a positive finding, as intimidation is not conducive to promoting an educational perspective of policy enforcement (Davis & Daugherty, 1992). The defend self and apologize strategies do not have clear positive or negative effects on policy enforcement; therefore, their limited use conveys no significant implications without more knowledge regarding their directional effects. The involve a third party strategy, however, is a strategy that should be further explored. On one hand, involving a third party could be a beneficial strategy in which RAs should engage if they are tempted to avoid addressing the situation. There is also the possibility, however, that involving a third party could be damaging to their role as policy enforcer because it could result in a lack of respect from residents (Davis & Daugherty, 1992).

The fifth research question explores how first-year RAs and returner (2^{nd}, 3^{rd}, and 4^{th} year) RAs engage differently in identity management strategies when acting in their various roles. There were a total of six identity management strategies (each related to one type of role) in which first-year RAs and returner RAs were found to engage differently. When facilitating community development, first-year RAs were "slightly unlikely" to use the apologize strategy while returner RAs were "unlikely" to use the apologize strategy. While first-year RAs were still "slightly unlikely" to use the strategy, the fact that they were more likely to use the apologize strategy than returner RAs could be linked to age difference. The majority of first-year RAs tend to be younger than returner RAs, creating a possible factor of age in the choice to use the

apologize strategy. Goddard (1990) discussed how RAs who are closer in age to residents are more likely to develop a sense of friendship with residents. While friendship with residents is addressed in this study within the role of being a friend, it still has possible implications within the community development role. Oetzel et. al's (2001) definition of the apologize strategy indicates the desire to appease another individual. This could likely be a contributing factor to why first-year RAs (who are more likely to develop friendships with residents) are more likely to engage in the apologize strategy when developing community.

When developing community, another strategy used differently by first-year RAs than by returner RAs is the expression of feelings. First-year RAs are "likely" to use the express feelings strategy while returner RAs are between "slightly likely" and "likely" to use the strategy. The finding indicates, but does not confirm, that first-year RAs might personally engage more in their role of developing community. Also related to the role of community development is the use of the exemplification strategy. First-year RAs were found to be "slightly likely" to use exemplification while returner RAs were between "slightly unlikely" and "slightly likely" to use the strategy. Once again, this indicates that a possible explanation for the difference in results could be that first-year RAs are more likely to engage in their role of developing community than returner RAs.

Related to the role of being a friend to residents, first-year RAs and returner RAs were both "likely" to engage in the consider the other strategy but first-year RAs were more likely to do so than returner RAs. Again, this finding could possibly relate to Goddard's (1990) work that indicates younger RAs are more likely to develop friendships with residents due to closeness in age. In the policy enforcement role, first-year RAs were between "slightly unlikely" and "slightly likely" to use the defend self strategy. Returner RAs, in contrast, were "slightly

unlikely" to use the strategy. A possible explanation for this difference could stem from the anxiety that the role of policy enforcement brings upon RAs (Goddard, 1990; Schaller & Wagner, 2007). While not discussed in previous literature, it could be possible that first-year RAs experience more anxiety than returner RAs, thus resulting in an increase in the use of the defend self strategy in policy enforcement.

The sixth research question explores the difference between how male RAs engage in identity management strategies differently from how female RAs engage in identity management strategies. There were five strategies that were significantly different in use among male RAs and female RAs. When serving in the role of developing community, male RAs were between "slightly unlikely" and "slightly likely" to engage in exemplification; however, female RAs were "slightly likely" to use exemplification. Since the exemplification strategy involves self-sacrificial actions and putting in extra effort, the results indicate that female RAs may put more effort into the role of developing community than male RAs. Within the role of serving as a peer helper, male RAs were "slightly likely" to use the consider the other strategy while female RAs were "likely" to consider the other. Since the act of considering the other is a component of serving as a peer helper, it appears that female RAs may be more effective in the role of peer helpers than male RAs (Burchard, 2001). Related to the role of being a friend to residents, male RAs were "slightly likely" to express their feelings while female RAs were "likely" to express their feelings. This finding, in particular, has the potential to encompass differences in general communication styles of males and females; as a result, there is not enough support to link the finding to a difference that is specific only to how male and female RAs engage in their role of being a friend to residents.

The policy enforcement role of RAs included two identity management strategies that were found to be significantly different in use among male and female RAs. Male RAs were more "unlikely" to use the apologize strategy while female RAs were "slightly unlikely" to use the apologize strategy. Male RAs were less likely to use the apologize strategy, possibly indicating that male RAs are less concerned than female RAs about offending or upsetting the recipient(s) of policy enforcement. Another strategy, involve a third party, was also found to be significantly different in use among male and female RAs. Male RAs were "unlikely" to involve a third party while female RAs were "slightly unlikely" to involve a third party while enforcing policy. Like the other findings that included the involve a third party strategy, there is a lack of knowledge about the effect of involving a third party that limits the discussion of the result. If the use of the involve a third party strategy is a way of avoiding the role of directly enforcing policy then the use of the strategy has different implications than if the involve a third party strategy is used only as a means for support during the act of enforcing policy.

The seventh research question explores the difference in use of identity management strategies among RAs with mostly freshmen residents, a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents, and mostly upperclassmen residents. There were seven identity management strategies that were found to be used differently among RAs with different resident populations. When engaging in the role of developing community, RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents were between "unlikely" and "slightly unlikely" to use avoidance. In contrast, both RAs with freshmen residents and RAs with upperclassmen residents were "slightly unlikely" to use avoidance. There is not a clear reason for the finding; however, it can be speculated that RAs with a mixed resident population are more aware of and committed to addressing the need for community development since the residents lack more common ground and shared

experiences than a homogenous resident population. Also related to the role of community development, the use of the express feelings strategy varied across RAs with different resident populations. RAs with mostly freshmen residents and RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents were "likely" to express their feelings. RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents were "slightly likely" to express their feelings, a finding that could be attributed to the perceived lack of interest in community development that is common among upperclassmen residents. While there is a lack of research on whether or not upperclassmen residents are actually less interested in community development, the perception that they are less interested has the potential to negatively affect RAs' efforts to develop community, as this finding most likely illustrates. Also within the role of community development, the exemplification strategy was found to be used differently among RAs with different resident populations. RAs with mostly freshmen residents and RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents were "slightly unlikely" to use exemplification. RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents were "slightly unlikely" to use exemplification. Once again, it can be speculated that this finding is related to the perception among RAs that upperclassmen residents are not interested in developing community. Therefore, RAs with upperclassmen residents are less likely to put forth extra effort and make sacrifices to develop community.

When serving as a peer helper, RAs with mostly freshmen residents and RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents were "likely" to consider the other. In contrast, RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents were only "slightly likely" to consider the other. Adding to the findings related to the community development role, this result could indicate a general tendency among RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents to put in less effort in connecting with and engaging with their residents through various roles. More research is needed to

determine if this difference among RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents is significant across RA roles, institutions, and time. The use of the avoid strategy in the role of being a friend to residents also provides support for the previously discussed line of thinking. While RAs with all types of resident populations were "unlikely" to use the avoid strategy, RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents were more likely to use the avoid strategy than RAs with mostly freshmen residents and RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents. Again, this finding lines up with previously discussed findings that highlight the possible lack of effort on the part of RAs with upperclassmen residents.

The study of the RA role of policy enforcement included two strategies that varied in use among RAs with different resident populations. First, RAs with mostly freshmen residents and RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents were "likely" to use avoidance. RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents, however, were only "slightly likely" to use avoidance. It is possible that RAs with mostly freshmen residents are more likely to avoid policy enforcement because of a desire to befriend residents; RAs with upperclassmen residents are more likely to avoid policy enforcement because of the previously discussed reasoning that they are less engaged in their RA roles while working with upperclassmen residents. However, neither of these rationalizations account for why RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents would be less likely to use avoidance. The second strategy that differed among RAs with different resident populations in the role of policy enforcement was the intimidation strategy. RAs with mostly freshmen residents and RAs with mostly upperclassmen residents were "slightly unlikely" to use the intimidation strategy while RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents were "slightly likely" to use the intimidation strategy. Again, there is not a clear line of reasoning for the presence of this finding.

The eighth research question explores the difference in use of identity management strategies among RAs in suite style residence halls, RAs in traditional style residence halls, and RAs in apartment style residence halls. There were five strategies that were found to be used differently among RAs in different style halls. Within the role of developing community, three strategies were used differently among RAs in different types of halls. First, RAs in suite style halls and RAs in apartment style halls were "slightly unlikely" to use the avoid strategy. RAs in traditional style residence halls, however, were between "unlikely" and "slightly unlikely" to use the avoid strategy. Of the three types of residence hall types, the traditional style is the only design that has bathrooms that are shared by everyone on the floor. This type of building is therefore more conducive to the development of community; this results from a shared sense of responsibility and open communication already in place due to resident interactions during the use of the communal bathroom (Perkins & Atkinson, 1973; Davis & Daugherty, 1992). As a result of this, RAs in traditional style halls could be less likely to use the avoid strategy than RAs in other types of halls because they are more motivated to address community development in a type of hall that is conducive to effective community development efforts. Another strategy used differently among RAs in the community development role was the express feelings strategy. RAs in suite style residence halls and traditional style residence halls were "likely" to use expression of feelings while RAs in apartment style residence halls were "slightly likely" to use expression of feelings. This difference could be accounted for based on the population of residents in the apartment style halls. The university from which this sample was drawn only allows upperclassmen students to live in apartment style halls. Therefore, suite style and traditional style residence halls have a much higher population of freshmen residents, although some upperclassmen residents live there as well. As was discussed earlier in regards to RAs

with different resident populations, RAs with upperclassmen students appear to be less likely to engage their residents in an effort to build community. This could explain why RAs in apartment style halls are less likely to use the express feelings strategy than RAs in other halls. The same concept can be applied to the findings regarding the next strategy used in the community development role: exemplification. RAs in suite style halls and RAs in traditional style halls were "slightly likely" to use exemplification while RAs in apartment style halls were "slightly unlikely" to use exemplification. Again, this result could be attributed to the lack of extra effort among RAs with upperclassmen residents (who are primarily in apartment style halls) in developing community on their floors.

Another strategy that was used differently by RAs in different types of residence halls occurred within the peer helper role. RAs in traditional style halls and RAs in apartment style halls were "slightly unlikely" to use the apologize strategy. In contrast, RAs in suite style halls were "slightly likely" to use the apologize strategy. There is no clear reason for this finding. The final strategy that is used differently among RAs in different types of halls is the avoid strategy when used in the role of being a friend to residents. RAs in all three types of halls were "unlikely" to use the avoid strategy in their role as a friend to residents; however, RAs in apartment style halls were more likely to use the avoid strategy than RAs in other types of halls. Once again, this finding provides support for the assertion that RAs with upperclassmen residents are less likely to put forth the same level of effort to engage their residents as RAs with freshmen residents or a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents.

The ninth research question explores the relationship among the likelihood of RAs engaging in identity management strategies and RAs' perceptions of self-monitoring. There were two weak, positive correlations found with both the apologize strategy and the defend self

strategy. In addition, there were two very weak, positive correlations found with both the pretend strategy and the avoid strategy. In general, however, the findings were not supportive of the notion that self-monitoring is related to the choice of identity management strategy by RAs. One reason for the lack of findings could be that scale measures, such as the identity management strategies measure used in this study, tend to correlate better with other scale measures, unlike the self-monitoring measure used in this study. Another significant finding to note is that the self-monitoring scale was not found to be reliable in this study. While not conclusive, the lack of reliability of the scale implies that there could be a more sensitive way of capturing the act of self-monitoring than by using the current self-monitoring scale (Snyder, 1974).

Overall, the findings from this study reveal glimpses into how RAs engage in identity management strategies related to their various roles. While developing community among residents, RAs most often engage in ingratiation or expression of feelings rather than choosing to engage in other strategies that could be detrimental to community development. As peer helpers for residents, RAs are more likely to use strategies like express of feelings, consider the other, exemplification, and involve a third party rather than choose some of the less beneficial strategies. When taking the role of being a friend to residents, RAs usually consider the other and express their feelings; in fact, RAs do not tend to engage in negative strategies while fulfilling the role of friendship with residents. A troublesome finding, however, is related to the role that existing research has already identified as the most difficult role for RAs: policy enforcement. RAs are most likely to engage in avoidance strategies during times of policy enforcement.

First-year RAs are typically going to actively engage in community development more than returner RAs do. In addition, younger RAs are more likely to develop friendships with residents and some of their choices of identity management strategies reflect this tendency. The findings of this study also indicate that female RAs are more effective than male RAs at fulfilling roles of community development, serving as a peer helper for residents, and being a friend to residents; however, male RAs are more direct and effective in policy enforcement. A possible factor that was unaccounted for, however, is the difference in male and female communication styles. This should be addressed in the future.

The most common finding among RAs with different resident populations was that RAs with upperclassmen residents appear to fall short of the same standard of effort and level of engagement that other RAs exhibit. This was reflected again in the findings regarding RAs who work in different types of halls: suite, traditional, and apartment. RAs in apartment style buildings (which have only upperclassmen residents) sometimes put in less intentional effort than RAs in other type of halls, as evidenced by their choice of identity management strategies. The repetition of the findings across two demographical factors lends to the validity of the result. And finally, the relationship of perceived self-monitoring to RAs' choice of identity management strategies was not supported.

The results of this study supply an illuminating glimpse into the world of identity management among RAs. The findings are neither comprehensive, nor without limitations. However, they provide a foundational layer for future research in a field that has previously lacked such a foundation.

Post-hoc Analysis Discussion

Up to this point, discussion of the study results has focused on the uniqueness of the scenarios, as dictated by the four different roles in which RAs engage. In order to more fully explore this study's area of focus, however, post-hoc analyses were conducted. This was done in an effort to take a look at the common differences in strategy use across the situations determined by each RA role. This was done through frequency distributions, independent t-tests, and ANOVAs.

First, frequency distributions of each strategy were determined; some strategies were used in only one RA role, while others were used across multiple RA roles. The frequencies of each strategy were determined across the roles in which each strategy was used. The frequency distributions revealed that for some strategies that appear to have negative benefits related to use, the majority of participants indicated they were unlikely to use the strategies. Those strategies include: pretend, avoid, and intimidation. Other frequency distribution findings, however, present an interesting angle in relation to the other results of the study; the avoidance strategy is an example of this. While the frequency distribution of the avoidance strategy across four roles indicates participants are generally unlikely to use avoidance, the finding does not reveal the high use of avoidance in the policy enforcement role. Another interesting finding, the defend self strategy was skewed towards either slightly likely or unlikely to be used. The same finding was true for expression of feelings. The express feelings strategy frequency distribution was skewed towards agreement across all three roles in which it was used. The consider the other strategy was also skewed towards agreement as most participants were at least slightly likely to use the consider the other strategy. In general, the frequency distributions reflected findings that

were revealed through other analysis procedures, with a few exceptions as noted in this discussion.

Next, an independent t-test was employed to determine if first-year RAs engage in identity management strategies differently than returner RAs, regardless of the role in which they are serving. The lack of significant findings implies that the high level of avoidance strategies among returner RAs may not result from a tendency among returner RAs to engage in avoidance strategies. Instead, other factors could be responsible for the high level of avoidance strategies, such as the architecture of the buildings in which they work or the type of resident population with which they work.

Another independent t-test was run to determine if male RAs engage in identity management strategies differently than female RAs, regardless of the role in which they are serving. The only strategy found to be significant in the t-test was the consider the other strategy. Therefore, male RAs and females RAs tend to engage in the consider the other strategy differently, regardless of the role or situation. Female RAs ($M = 9.61$) were more likely to engage in the consider the other strategy than male RAs ($M = 9.06$). Because the consider the other strategy is a positive strategy, this could indicate a higher level of job effectiveness among female RAs.

ANOVAs revealed that five identity management strategies were used differently across all RA roles by RAs with freshmen residents, RAs with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents, and RAs with upperclassmen residents. RAs with upperclassmen residents were most likely to engage in avoidance, regardless of the role or situation, thus lending credibility to the previously mentioned argument that the use of avoidance strategies may be linked to type of resident population, not type of RA. In a similar manner, there were findings that RAs with

upperclassmen residents were less likely than RAs with other types of resident populations to use the express feelings, exemplification, and consider the other strategies; these findings could also indicate that the type of resident population has one of the strongest effects on what strategies are used by RAs. And lastly, RAs with freshmen residents and a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents were more likely to use the intimidation strategy than RAs with upperclassmen residents. One possible explanation for this could be that RAs with upperclassmen residents think the strategy would be less effective because older residents would not be as intimidated as younger, freshmen residents.

Another set of ANOVAs revealed that RAs in suite style halls, traditional style halls, and apartment style halls engaged in three identity management strategies differently across roles and scenarios. RAs in apartment style halls were found to be more likely to engage in the avoid strategy than RAs in suite style or traditional style halls. This provides support for the argument that the use of the avoidance strategy could be attributed to the architecture of the building in which the RA works. Due to the lay-out of apartment style buildings, RAs can engage in avoidance more easily than in another building because there is little common space on the floor and residents are more likely to stay in their apartments because they have everything they need where they live. There is little explanation for why RAs in traditional style halls were most likely to engage in the express feelings strategy and why RAs in suite style halls were most likely to engage in the exemplification strategy; however, further research should explore the possible reasons for these findings.

Future Research and Limitations

Many interesting questions regarding RAs and identity management strategies arose throughout this study. Several concerns could be addressed through further research regarding the impact of specific strategies on the roles and actions of RAs. For example, the use of ingratiation as an identity management strategy appeared in the findings regarding the RA role of community development. However, without an understanding of the how the use of favors and flattery specifically impacts relationships with residents and efforts of community building, the effect of the strategy cannot be categorized in a directional manner. In the same way, the use of the involve a third party strategy should also be addressed in future research. Especially in regards to the peer helper and policy enforcement roles, involving a third party could have numerous effects that are contingent upon the manner in which the third party is involved, who the third party is, and how the third party's involvement is introduced.

Perhaps the most troublesome finding of this study, the common use of the avoid strategy among RAs in their role as policy enforcers, needs to be addressed more completely in the future. While past studies have argued and supported the idea that policy enforcement is the most difficult role in which RAs engage, the use of avoidance makes the role impossible to effectively fulfill. If future studies focus on why and how RAs use the avoid strategy in policy enforcement situations then practitioners may be able to reverse the trend among RAs over time. However, it should be noted that the post-hoc analysis indicates that the avoidance strategy could be more linked to the type of residence hall, rather than the type of RA (i.e., returner versus first-year). This angle should also be considered and explored in future research endeavors.

Another interesting area for future research deals with the difference in identity management strategy use among male and female RAs. This study revealed significant

differences in the strategies male and females choose to use in their roles as RAs, indicating that female RAs are more effective in every role except policy enforcement. In addition, the post-hoc analysis revealed that female RAs are more likely to use the consider the other strategy than male RAs, regardless of the RA role. These findings should be explored further, allowing for differences in the way that males and females communicate and choose to engage in relationships in general. If these factors do not account for the high rating of females in their roles as RAs then the implications are significant; practitioners will need to address why and how male RAs have fallen behind female RAs in effectiveness. Actions to lessen this gap in effectiveness will be extremely important to take if the gap actually exists.

Consistently throughout this study, results revealed that RAs who work with upperclassmen residents (identified either through resident population type or style of residence hall) put forth less effort in their roles than RAs who work with a mix of freshmen and upperclassmen residents or freshmen residents. Is the lack of effort among RAs with upperclassmen residents due to a perception among RAs that upperclassmen residents are not interested in what RAs do in the residence life environment? Or are RAs who work with upperclassmen residents simply less motivated? Or, as the post-hoc analysis possibly implies, is the problem related to the architecture of the halls in which the upperclassmen live and not the RAs? These questions must be answered if practitioners wish to have any impact on the improvement of how RAs with upperclassmen residents fulfill their roles.

While this study did not address the use of technology, it is certainly an avenue of future research that should be explored. As the use of technology grows exponentially across society, its increasing use among college students is also significant. The use of communication technology among members of the university community raises numerous issues for future

research; related to the RA position specifically, the use of technology should be studied to determine its impact on the effectiveness of RAs in their various roles. After all, technology has the capabilities to be used to grow community on the floor, develop friendships with residents, assist RAs in serving as peer mentors and resources for residents, and potentially even allow RAs to enforce policy or educate residents of policies. Future research should explore these areas by identifying the specific ways in which technology is used by RAs in their roles. In addition, future research should aim at determining the impact that the use of technology has on the effectiveness of RAs as they carry out their responsibilities through their various roles.

Yet another area that should be explored by future research is that of friendship with residents. As was noted in this study, the role of a RA as a friend to residents is a topic of debate in the literature; for the purposes of this study, however, friendship with residents was categorized as a role of RAs. The question remains though: is friendship a job responsibility of RAs or simply an orientation through which RAs can successfully fulfill their responsibilities? Goddard (1990) notes the difficulties associated with befriending residents while still fulfilling other responsibilities of the RA job. However, if friendship with residents cannot be defined as a job responsibility, can friendship with residents really be operationalized as a role of RAs? After all, it is possible that friendship with residents is simply an orientation through which RAs operate; if that is the case then more exploration is necessary to determine the impact that friendship with residents has on a RA's effectiveness in the position. The more appropriate job responsibility may involve being friendly rather than being a friend. Ultimately, future research should determine whether or not friendship with residents can be defined as a duty of RAs or if it is simply a framework through which they engage in their roles. Based on that determination, scholars can identify practical application steps for recruitment, training, and evaluation of RAs.

Further testing of these relationships will continue to open up the world of identity management among RAs. A variety of methods could be used to further the information gained through this study. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, could provide greater insight into identity management strategy choices among RAs and behavioral patterns. Information gathered through quantitative methods could still be beneficial, particularly if the limitations of the current study's methodology are addressed.

The methodological limitations of this study primarily stem from the identity management measure used. There are no widely accepted identity management measures so the measure used in this study was created for the purpose of this study and has not been empirically tested before. While the measure did result in statistically significant findings, the validity and reliability of the measurements are unknown. Further study is needed to design a valid and reliable measure.

In addition, the use of the self-monitoring measure in combination with the designed identity management measure presents an issue. The identity management measure is a scale item; its correlation with the self-monitoring measure is not ideal, partly because the self-monitoring measure is not a scale item. If the two concepts are to be studied together then a greater correlation might be achieved if the measures were more methodologically similar.

Implications

This project falls into the category of applied research. As the study was conducted, themes arose among the findings; these themes include implications for the selection of RAs, the training of RAs, and the administration and supervision of RAs. An overview of the major implications in these areas will provide some practical application guidelines for university housing administrators and suggestions for further exploration by scholars.

The selection process of RAs can differ from institution to institution and even from year to year at each institution. Therefore, a certain sense of stability is needed in the manner in which selection occurs, regardless of the professionals who are involved with implementing the process. Certain findings from this study raise some interesting questions regarding characteristics and personality traits of individuals who are recruited as RAs. One example of this is the use of the avoidance strategy. The findings of this study reveal that all RAs have a tendency to use the avoidance identity management strategy across all of their roles. Obviously, this finding is of major concern to housing administrators, as it implies that RA responsibilities are not being fulfilled. Therefore, administrators should consider the implications of this study result in relation to the RA selection process. Can the use of the avoidance strategy be predicted by determining RA candidates' conflict styles during the selection process? If so, is it beneficial to sift out candidates who strongly engage in avoidance conflict strategies? While this avenue should be explored, it should be noted that only future research in this area can provide enough information upon which to make changes to the selection process. While the high use of the avoidance strategy appears to indicate benefits in changing the selection process, it does not confirm the need to do so. After all, administrators must determine whether or not avoidance is a strategy that RAs can be trained not to use. If training can significantly decrease the use of the strategy then the implications are not as great for the selection process because the problem area can be effectively addressed during RA training. In addition, administrators should explore the potential effects of the architecture of residence halls on the likelihood of RAs using the avoidance strategy. It is possible, as was highlighted in the post-hoc analysis discussion, that the architecture of some halls could foster the use of the avoidance strategy.

Yet another possible implication related to the selection of RAs deals with the identity management strategies involving the willingness to consider the other and the expression of feelings. Across the board, female RAs were found to use these strategies more often than male RAs. More research is needed to determine if this is due to gender differences; however, a possible implication for the selection process still stands. It is possible to include in the selection process methods to identify candidates who are more empathetic and expressive of their feelings than other candidates. This would increase the likelihood of the candidates using the consider the other and express feelings strategies in the RA position. It would also take some of the emphasis off of the training and administration of RAs because RAs would not need to be taught to empathize and express feelings, only guided in how to do so effectively.

The results of this study also provide some implications for the training of RAs. The use of the third party strategy needs to be further explored, but a related implication for training is suggested by the study results. Housing administrators can guide RAs' use of this strategy through the manner in which they train RAs to involve or not involve a third party. For example, when the process of policy enforcement is taught to RAs, the option of involving a third party should be described and illustrated by administrators. This will allow RAs to learn when housing administrators consider it appropriate to involve a third party, who is considered an appropriate individual to involve, and how residents should or should not be involved in the process of deciding to involve a third party. This exploration during training can be applied across the roles of RAs, not just related to policy enforcement. By establishing parameters, administrators have the opportunity to clarify what is acceptable and what is not acceptable when using the involve a third party strategy.

Another implication for training of RAs relates to the use of exemplification. As was explored in the findings section, exemplification tends to be used among RAs when developing community. Again, housing administrators have the opportunity to establish boundaries of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable when RAs engage in exemplification. While future research is needed to determine what uses of exemplification are effective, there is the danger of RAs using unethical forms of ingratiation through certain types of favors or flattery. Housing administrators should take advantage of training sessions to communicate expectations to RAs of what types of favors or flattery are acceptable, if any.

Housing administrators should also be cognizant of the previously discussed implications during the overall administration of RAs. Some of the most notable implications for the administration of RAs, however, deal with policy enforcement and with returner RAs. The findings of this study reveal that first-year RAs are more like to use the defend self strategy when enforcing policy, while returner RAs are more likely to use the avoid strategy when enforcing policy. These findings starkly contrast one another, illustrating the likelihood that while all RAs are likely to experience anxiety during policy enforcement (Schaller & Wagner, 2007), first-year RAs usually fulfill the role's responsibilities while returner RAs tend to avoid doing so. It is very possible that this finding exists because returner RAs feel they can get away with not always fulfilling their role as policy enforcers; this does not imply that first-year RAs want to be fulfilling their role, only that they may feel as if they will be held more accountable for doing so. For housing administrators, this indicates the need to supervise returner RAs in a manner which communicates that they will be held accountable for not fulfilling their responsibilities.

Another closely related implication for the administration of RAs also addresses returner RAs. At most institutions, including the one at which this study's data was collected, RAs who

are returning to the position after one or more years are allowed to apply for a transfer to another hall if they would like. While only a small number of RAs choose to apply for a hall transfer, the impact that transfer RAs can have on a staff is significant; after all, if a staff consists of 10 RAs then one RA can easily have an impact on the staff dynamics. The findings of this study reveal that RAs with upperclassmen residents or those in apartment-style buildings are more likely to use avoidance strategies in every role than RAs with freshmen residents or in other styles of halls. Related to the RA transfer process, this finding is significant because within this sample all RAs in apartment-style buildings were returner RAs. In fact, the apartment-style buildings are typically those requested by RAs who apply for hall transfers. However, if returner RAs are requesting to be transferred to apartment-style halls for the benefits of the hall lay-out (having a kitchen, having friends as roommates, etc.), it is possible that they could be more interested in the benefits of apartment-style living than actually fulfilling their responsibilities in the new hall. This indicates that housing administrators should be vigilant in determining which hall transfer requests to approve in a manner that does not cater to RAs' personal preferences but ensures that RAs will still be motivated to effectively fulfill their responsibilities. Otherwise, a transfer RA's tendency to use avoidance can easily spread to other staff members as well.

While all of these implications hold numerous steps for housing administrators to take in the selection, training, and administration of RAs, it should be noted that further exploration of the findings is needed to demonstrate the value of the implications discussed here. This discussion is only a brief and limited effort at illustrating the significance of the findings of this study.

Conclusions

Overall, this study opens a door into the world of RAs and university housing that has not been explored in previous research. In general, higher education literature is limited in its scope of topics; as a result, there is an abundance of questions in the field and a significant lack of answers. While much research is needed in the future to confirm and validate the findings of the current study, many foundational answers to questions resulted from this study.

Even in the earliest RA research findings, the value of and impact made by the RA position has never been in doubt (Davis & Daugherty, 1992). With this in mind, the results of the current study hold even more value. After all, RAs are often the most accessible and available individuals for residents (Jaeger & Caison, 2006). If student affairs administrators wish to reach students then an extremely effective avenue is through RAs. In order to harness that power, however, administrators must develop an understanding of how RAs lead. As Goddard (1990) asserts, "the manner in which a resident assistant tells and sells, and participates and delegates will have a significant impact on their ability to lead, in every sense of the word" (p. 3). Identity management is a vital component of this, illustrating directly how a RA engages in such actions of telling, selling, participating, and delegating (Goddard, 1990). The field is vastly unexplored by research studies but the findings of this study provide significant motivation for future studies to discover the depth of the roles and effective identity management strategies of RAs.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Statement of Willingness to Participate

This project focuses on identity management strategies. You will be asked to share your views with the researcher from the University of Tennessee. My interest in this project is to determine how RAs use identity management strategies.

All data collected will be maintained in a confidential manner. Your responses during the project will only be presented in aggregate or summary form. Your identity will never be connected with the data. Your responses will not be released to any individual outside of the research team.

Your participation in the project is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study. You are free not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. Your participation in the study indicates that all of your questions concerning the procedures of project have been answered to your satisfaction. Participation also indicates that you agree that there are not potential risks, liabilities, or discomforts associated with participation in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, please contact Rachel Edwards: redwar12@utk.edu.

<u>Directions:</u> Please circle each term that best describes you or your position.

1. In what style of residence hall do you work?

Suite Style Traditional Style (Community Style) Apartment Style

2. With what general student population do you work?

Mostly Freshmen Mix of Freshmen and Upperclassmen Mostly Upperclassmen

3. Please circle the following terms that describe you:

Male Female

First-year RA Returner RA (2^{nd}, 3^{rd}, 4^{th} year)

<u>Directions:</u> Please read the following hypothetical situations and questions carefully. Each italicized section is a hypothetical situation. Assume that you are faced with each situation in your position as a RA. Please answer the questions that correspond with each situation honestly and according to your first instinct. There are no right or wrong answers. Each page has a different situation and corresponding questions.

Hypothetical Situation #1: *One way of building community is to come up with community standards for your floor. Your Hall Director has suggested that you do this at the first floor meeting of the year. How likely are you to engage in the following behaviors?*

4. I would apologize to my residents for having to spend time setting community standards.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

5. I would not talk about community and instead just ask my residents to come up with some standards they would like to have for the floor.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

Hypothetical Situation #1 (continued): *One way of building community is to come up with community standards for your floor. Your Hall Director has suggested that you do this at the first floor meeting of the year. How likely are you to engage in the following behaviors?*

6. I would tell my residents that I would have made the floor meeting shorter but my Hall Director suggested I do this – so it's not my fault that the meeting is long.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

7. I would engage my residents in a discussion about ways to set community standards by sharing my own feelings and thoughts.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

8. I would pretend that I want to be setting community standards even though I would rather not be discussing the topic.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

9. I would tell my residents how much I appreciate them taking time to set community standards for our floor.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

10. I would laminate and hang a poster with the community standards in our lobby so that everyone will see them daily.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

11. I would tell my residents that I am not very good at coming up with community standards so I need their help in doing so.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

Hypothetical Situation #2: *You have overheard that one of your residents is having a rough week. How likely are to engage in the following behaviors?*

12. I would avoid making contact with my resident because I feel it is not my place to get involved in his/her personal life.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

13. I would leave my resident a note so he/she knows I'm concerned about him/her and I am available if he/she needs anything.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

14. I would seek out my resident's roommate and make sure he/she is watching out for the resident who is having a rough week.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

15. I would seek out my resident and express my concerns for his/her health and well-being.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

16. I would give my resident my cell phone number and tell him/her that I am available whenever needed so he/she knows that I am there to help.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

Hypothetical Situation #3: *You overhear that one of your residents is having a difficult time making friends. How likely are you to engage in the following behaviors?*

17. I would apologize to my resident for having been so busy and not having spent more time with him/her.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

18. I would tell my resident that I would like to spend time with him/her but avoid actually doing so.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

19. I would spend time with my resident because I know it would mean a lot to him/her.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

20. I would spend time with my resident but after I have invited someone else to hang out with us.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

21. I would spend time with my resident and pretend to be really good friends.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

22. I would spend time with my resident and make sure I tell him/her how much fun I'm having so that he/she will enjoy spending time with me too.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

23. I would spend time with my resident and talk about how I want to make more friends so that he/she knows that I need friends too.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

24. I would tell my resident about a time when I had difficulty making friends.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

Hypothetical Situation #4: *You hear loud music coming from one of the rooms on your floor late one night. How likely are you to engage in the following behaviors?*

25. I would document my residents and apologize for doing so.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

26. I would tell my residents they are in violation of the noise policy but if they turn down the music I will not document them.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

27. I would document my residents but tell them it is not my fault that they are being documented because it is just part of my job.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

28. I would call another RA or head staff member to provide support and have him/her be the one who actually documents my residents.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

29. I would document my residents and stress the seriousness of the incident.

Highly unlikely Unlikely Slightly unlikely Slightly likely Likely Highly likely

<u>Directions:</u> The statements below concern your personal reactions to a number of different situations. No two statements are exactly alike, so consider each statement carefully before answering. If a statement is TRUE or MOSTLY TRUE as applied to you, circle the "T" next to the question. If a statement is FALSE or NOT USUALLY TRUE as applied to you circle the "F" next to the question.

It is important to remember that these questions are about you personally – not just what you do in the RA position.

(T) (F) 30. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people.

(T) (F) 31. My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.

(T) (F) 32. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like.

(T) (F) 33. I can only argue for ideas which I already believe.

(T) (F) 34. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information.

(T) (F) 35. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain people.

(T) (F) 36. When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues.

(T) (F) 37. I would probably make a good actor.

(T) (F) 38. I rarely seek the advice of my friends to choose movies, books, or music.

(T) (F) 39. I sometimes appear to others to be experiencing deeper emotions than I actually am.

(T) (F) 40. I laugh more when I watch a comedy with others than when alone.

(T) (F) 41. In groups of people, I am rarely the center of attention.

(T) (F) 42. In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons.

(T) (F) 43. I am not particularly good at making other people like me.

(T) (F) 44. Even if I am not enjoying myself, I often pretend to be having a good time.

(T) (F) 45. I'm not always the person I appear to be.

(T) (F) 46. I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone else or win their favor.

(T) (F) 47. I have considered being an entertainer.

(T) (F) 48. In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect me to be rather than anything else.

(T) (F) 49. I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting.

<u>Directions (continued from previous page):</u> The statements below concern your personal reactions to a number of different situations. No two statements are exactly alike, so consider each statement carefully before answering. If a statement is TRUE or MOSTLY TRUE as applied to you, circle the "T" next to the question. If a statement is FALSE or NOT USUALLY TRUE as applied to you circle the "F" next to the question.

It is important to remember that these questions are about you personally – not just what you do in the RA position.

(T) (F) 50. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.

(T) (F) 51. At a party, I let others keep the jokes and stories going.

(T) (F) 52. I feel a bit awkward in company and do not show up quite as well as I should.

(T) (F) 53. I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if it is for a good cause).

(T) (F) 54. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them.

Vita

Rachel Elizabeth Edwards was born in Boone, NC. After graduating from Watauga High School in 2005, she attended The University of Tennessee at Knoxville (UT). In 2009, Rachel graduated from UT with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies. Rachel enrolled in graduate school at UT and graduated with a Masters of Science degree in Communication and Information in the summer of 2010.